

Financial and Banking Information Infrastructure Committee
Sponsorship of Priority Telecommunications Access for Private Sector Entities
through the National Communications System
Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS)

The National Communications System (NCS) was established in 1963 to provide priority communications support to critical government functions during emergencies. In 1984 the National Security and Emergency Preparedness (NS/EP) capabilities of NCS were broadened and an interagency group (currently twenty-two federal departments and agencies) was formed to help coordinate and plan NS/EP services. The NCS has developed a number of priority telecommunications services that are also available to private sector entities through sponsorship by an NCS member department or agency. The events of September 11, 2001 put a new focus on the importance of these programs to the nation and to the financial sector.

In order to provide guidance to financial organizations seeking sponsorship for NCS services, the Financial and Banking Information Infrastructure Committee¹ (FBIIC) is developing a series of policies on the sponsorship of priority telecommunications access for private sector entities through the NCS. The goal of the policies is twofold: first, to make financial organizations aware of NCS programs and, second, to provide a consistent set of guidance regarding qualification criteria and the appropriate process for organizations that want to gain access to the programs.

As a first step, the FBIIC has established this policy and process to sponsor qualifying financial sector institutions for Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS)². GETS is designed to help assure communication between key public and private sector personnel during times of crisis.

GETS is a telecommunications voice service that supports federal, state, and local government; industry; and non-profit organizations in performing their NS/EP missions by providing emergency access and priority processing for voice communications services in the local and long-distance segments of the Public Switched Network (PSN). GETS is intended to be used in an emergency or crisis situation when heavy usage of the PSN by organizations and the public decreases the probability of completing a call. Private sector organizations that need to participate in the GETS program must be sponsored by an NCS member. While there is no subscription fee, GETS calls are billed at the rate of \$0.15 per minute for calls within North America and most of the Caribbean. International calls are billed at commercial rates. More information about the GETS program, including Frequently Asked Questions, is available on the NCS web site <<http://www.ncs.gov>> under *Programs*.

¹ The Financial and Banking Information Infrastructure Committee (FBIIC) is a standing committee of the President's Critical Infrastructure Protection Board, and is charged with coordinating federal and state financial regulatory efforts to improve the reliability and security of the U.S. financial system. Treasury's Assistant Secretary for Financial Institutions chairs the committee. Members of the FBIIC include representatives of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the Conference of State Bank Supervisors, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the Federal Reserve Board, the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, the National Credit Union Administration, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, the Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight, the Offices of Homeland and Cyberspace Security, the Office of Thrift Supervision, and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

² It is anticipated that subsequent policies will address other NCS programs, for example, Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP) and Wireless Priority Service (WPS).

There are five broad categories that serve as guidelines for determining who may qualify as a GETS user: (1) National Security Leadership, (2) National Security Posture and U.S. Population Attack Warning, (3) Public Health, Safety, and Maintenance of Law and Order, (4) Public Welfare and Maintenance of National Economic Posture and (5) Disaster Recovery. The FBIIC agencies have determined that to qualify for GETS sponsorship, organizations must support the performance of NS/EP functions necessary to maintain the national economic posture during any national or regional emergency. In particular, the FBIIC agencies view maintenance of the national economic posture as the minimization of systemic disruption to the financial system directly related to the operation of critical financial markets and related essential services and systems.

Essential services and systems are those that have no easily accessible substitute and that are necessary to support one of three critical NS/EP functions in key financial markets and payment mechanisms: necessary crisis response and coordination activities; resumption and maintenance of economic activity; and the orderly completion of outstanding financial transactions and necessary offsetting transactions. For example, essential services and systems include: critical funds transfers systems (wholesale/large-value payment systems), securities and derivatives clearing and settlement systems, supporting communication systems and service providers, and key financial market trading systems and exchanges.

Private sector financial organizations and their service providers may qualify for GETS sponsorship if they play a significant role in one or more financial markets or essential services or systems. Factors which the appropriate FBIIC member agency will consider in determining whether individual organizations play a significant role in an essential market, service or system include consideration of whether the organization: (1) is a registered securities or futures exchange, self-regulatory organization, registered securities clearing agency/depository and futures clearinghouse, and their critical service providers and utilities; (2) acts as market utility for effecting payments or clearance and settlement of transactions; (3) processes a large aggregate value of daily payments; (4) provides critical services or systems to financial institutions; (5) has a national or large regional presence in one or more product lines; or (6) demonstrates other facts or circumstances that suggest facilitating the organization's access to the GETS priority service in times of national emergency would serve to maintain the national economic posture.

Organizations seeking GETS sponsorship should complete the attached FBIIC Request for GETS Sponsorship and submit it to their primary financial regulator. Requesting organizations must support their request for sponsorship under the general NS/EP criteria stated above.

The FBIIC agencies may contact those organizations that clearly qualify under these criteria and inform them of the availability of GETS Sponsorship³.

Individuals being nominated for GETS usage should be limited to those individuals who play critical roles in the organization's business continuity or crisis response management structure.

³ In its role as a payments system operator, the Federal Reserve has traditionally sponsored significant participants in the payments system for NCS services. The Federal Reserve therefore intends to contact those organizations that clearly qualify under the criteria and ask them to provide the names of individuals who should receive GETS cards. The Federal Reserve will notify the other FBIIC agencies of institutions they have contacted.

Financial and Banking Information Infrastructure Committee
Request for GETS Sponsorship

Date:

To: _____

Upon reviewing the Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) information provided and based on our emergency telecommunications requirements, our organization requests Financial and Banking Information Infrastructure Committee sponsorship to the GETS program for the following individual(s):

Name of Organization: _____

National Security / Emergency Preparedness Justification

Name and Title of Individual

Critical Role

We acknowledge that our organization:

- 1) May not reference the GETS card in our marketing activities or for other competitive advantage purposes.
- 2) Must establish a GETS Point of Contact (POC) and Alternate for administering GETS and to ensure accountability for each card issued to it.
- 3) Will withdraw the GETS card from any individual that no longer fulfills the designated role or function that meets the criteria.
- 4) Must establish a Billing contact for payment of bills for GETS usage. We understand that upon approval of this request, we will be provided a letter notifying us of the sponsorship and requesting that we establish a Billing Account with a Program Designator Code (PDC) for billing and payment of our GETS calls.

We further understand that cards issued under this sponsorship program may be cancelled at the discretion of the NCS or FBIIC.

GETS POC at Requesting Organization:

Name:	Phone:
Title:	FAX:
Mail Address:	E-Mail:

Please fax this request to _____